

The Persistence of Scent

Mother, you will persist in fragrances—
the nectar-scent of carrots, pineapple, pecans
baking in a two-layer cake. I will shorten
my mornings into hours of praise.

More than alchemy, fresh cilantro—
in pungent handfuls—will be sautéed with garlic,
onions, tomatoes. And like magic, beans
will turn into savories in my ordinary kitchen.

And the aroma of lilies will not be resisted.
I will plant tigers, stars, Easters, cannas, callas.
The rain on their talcum will conjure you—
your skin this satiny scent—

here, on the porch swing, just after a bath.
I will sprinkle lily petals on my pond,
dip my hand in this holy water,
rub your silk into my fingers.

But it is the tang of the sea that will return
your salt to soothe my wound. Here in this watery
womb of the earth—this place you love only
from a distance since you never learned to swim—
here I will stop holding my breath, inhale the sting.

-Cindy Williams Gutierrez